

DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

CORE PRINCIPLES

Through record engagement and activism, the women of this country helped deliver the Democratic majority and the most diverse Congress in history. We have been at the forefront of the fight for equal pay, affordable health care, including reproductive health care, and freedom from violence and discrimination. Our agenda as follows reflects the common theme that when women have access to the tools they need to succeed their communities and the world are more peaceful and prosperous.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Women and families can't afford to wait any longer for equal pay. Despite being breadwinners in most families with children, women who work full time, year-round still only make 80 cents on the dollar for men's earnings. For women of color it is even less. Black women make only 61 cents, Latinas make 53 cents, and Native women make 58 cents for every dollar paid to white men. While Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women make 85 cents for every dollar paid to white men, many AAPI communities experience drastically wider pay gaps. Close to two-thirds of minimum wage workers are women, and women are far more likely than men to hold low-wage jobs. Although women are nearly half the U.S. workforce, they make up only a small percentage of employees in the skilled trades and other non-traditional occupations. Women's lower wages also exacerbate the student loan crisis, with women holding two-thirds of outstanding student debt. In addition, just 17 percent of the workforce has paid family leave, fewer than 40 percent of workers has access to paid personal medical leave, and nearly one in three private-sector workers does not have a single paid sick day. Women still face pregnancy discrimination and are forced out of a job or denied reasonable accommodations. And high-quality child care, essential for children to learn in safe, nurturing environments while parents work, is increasingly unaffordable. Moreover, the child care workers providing this essential public good – most of whom are women, and disproportionately women of color and immigrant women – earn poverty level wages, undermining their economic security. These issues are interrelated, with pay discrimination and barriers to economic opportunity jeopardizing women's ability to access the health care they need, afford child care, or reach their full potential. *Women deserve economic opportunity, security, and policies that recognize the demands of work and family.*

SAFETY & FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE

Sexual violence robs women of their ability to provide for their families and advance in the workplace, schools, and the military. One in three women experience sexual violence in their lifetime, one in five women are sexually assaulted on college campuses, and 56 percent of girls and 40 percent of boys in grades 7-12 are sexually harassed in any given school year. Moreover, 60 to 70 percent of women face sexual harassment during their careers, with Black and Brown women disproportionately impacted, and over 49,000 cases of human trafficking are reported annually in the U.S. with women and girls representing 75 percent of those trafficked. In the wake of #MeToo, women and men are bravely coming forward to share their stories of sexual harassment and assault and demand change to our laws and institutions. Women and families are also facing the threat of gun violence, with women 21 times more likely to be murdered with guns in the U.S. than in other high-income countries and most mass shootings related to domestic or family violence. Women, particularly women of color, are also disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, which threatens the safety and economic security of all people. As a nation built by immigrant families, we also recognize that women and families seeking refuge deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Our nation's immigration policies must be humane. Cruel policies, such as family separation, will not be tolerated. *Women and girls deserve to feel safe and secure in all aspects of life.*

DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

CORE PRINCIPLES

EQUALITY FOR ALL

The fact that women, particularly women of color and LGBTQI+ individuals, continue to face pervasive discrimination in all aspects of life permeates our society and makes our hard-earned rights vulnerable. Discrimination robs individuals of their ability to care for themselves and their families. *Women and LGBTQI+ individuals deserve dignity and equality under the law.*

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE & REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

All people deserve access to affordable and comprehensive health care, as well as the dignity, autonomy, and economic security to make the health care decisions that are best for them. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), more women and their families have insurance coverage to get the care they need. However, constant attacks on the ACA undermine the health and well-being of Americans. Instead of attacking the ACA and access to care, women and families deserve action to address the maternal mortality crisis, lower health care costs, and expand access to care, including reproductive health care. Women need access to family planning to lead fully productive lives and control their own destinies. Restrictions on reproductive care and insurance coverage of reproductive health care, including abortion, particularly harm those who already face barriers to health care including communities of color and those struggling to make ends meet. Attempts to restrict access to sex education, contraception, counseling, and abortion at home and abroad are a harmful violation of women's freedoms. *Women deserve quality, affordable health care, and to have control over their own bodies.*

SUPPORTING WOMEN SERVICEMEMBERS & VETERANS

For too long, the contributions and distinct challenges faced by women servicemembers and veterans have been forgotten or ignored. Women servicemembers are vital to our nation's defense, and their growing inclusion in all military fields, including combat arms, can only strengthen our military's readiness. Representation of women in the military has increased to 17 percent, a far cry from the 2 percent representation in 1970. Despite this positive trend, military and veteran institutions and cultures fall desperately short in their support for women servicemembers and veterans. Military Sexual Trauma continues to plague our armed forces and service academies. Some Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities lack the ability to provide equitable care or services women veterans need, including care for sexual violence. The U.S. must ensure the VA can address the needs of women veterans who struggle to access the benefits they have earned, and continue to face barriers such as homelessness, unemployment, as well as barriers to the medical care they need. *Women servicemembers and veterans deserve our recognition, support and respect.*

EMPOWERING WOMEN GLOBALLY

Promoting gender equality, advancing people's health and well-being, and upholding human rights so all people are free from violence and discrimination are essential to ensuring economic, social, and political empowerment for women and girls. When women are empowered, their countries are more peaceful and prosperous, benefitting our own national security. *Women and girls around the world deserve education, economic opportunity, safety, and health care, including reproductive freedom.*